

The University of Chicago

AN INTRODUCTION TO
PALAEOGRAPHY FOR LIBRARIANS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE LIBRARY
SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1935

By
LEWIS STIEG

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CHAPTER V

LEARNING TO READ A MEDIAEVAL SCRIPT

I. Learning to Read from Facsimiles

Since modern letter forms are descended directly from the earliest known examples of Roman writing, one might expect to find considerable transfer of reading ability from any one of these related scripts to the others. While the resemblance between the elements of the letter forms of our day and their precursors is usually apparent after a comparison, such recognition is only a first step toward learning to read a mediaeval script, for reading depends not upon the effect produced by individual letters, but upon the reaction to a group of letters.¹

The physiological process of reading consists of a series of snapshots taken during pauses in the movement of the eyes across the page.² Modern methods of instruction are designed to train the individual to cover as large a span as possible during each pause. As a result, "One does not see a few letters for themselves and supply others, but rather sees a certain shape of black and white and this immediately suggests a familiar word as a whole."³ Normal reading, therefore, is not a progress from letter to letter, but by words phrases or even clauses, depending upon the range of visual perception and the difficulty of the

¹O. Messmer, "Zur Psychologie des Lesens bei Kindern und Erwachsenen," Archiv für die gesamte Psychologie, II (1903), 217.

²Miles A. Tinker, "Visual apprehension and perception in reading," Psychological bulletin, XXVI (1929), 231.

³Walter B. Pillsbury and Clarence L. Meader, The psychology of language (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1928), p. 133.

material. We are so accustomed to a rather limited set of graphic symbols, that as a rule any variation immediately disturbs the perceptive process by introducing patterns to which the eye is not accustomed, and reading then becomes slower and more difficult.¹ Perhaps this explains the tremendous power of tradition in preserving the existing forms of alphabets. In Germany, the blackletter typeface is still used, although for more than fifty years various organizations have been issuing propaganda for a universal adoption of the Roman. Even a minor variation, like the elimination of capital letters, may cause general discomfort and disapproval. A popular magazine in its efforts to be modernistic experimented for a time with this simplification in its typography, but because of the many objections from subscribers, it quickly reverted to the conventional style.²

This inflexibility in reading habits must be overcome if the student is to learn a variety of mediaeval scripts. In some cases, it may be comparatively easy to make the necessary readjustments. Many specimens of the Carolingian minuscule, for example, in which only a few letters show any variation from contemporary forms, can be read accurately and easily at the first trial. For the more difficult scripts, particularly cursive varieties, considerable practice may be necessary.

Since efficient reading depends so generally on the perception of a group of symbols and the association of the resulting image with a familiar word, this method should be carried over in reading manuscripts. Therefore, when a student begins to learn a

¹Miles A. Tinker, "Influence of form of type on the perception of words," Journal of applied psychology, XVI (1932), 168.

²Vanity fair, XXXIV (1930), 31.

script, he should proceed immediately to texts, without attempting to memorize the appearance of the letters as individuals. It is, of course, helpful to look over an alphabet of the script, but for mere reading it is probably wasted effort to read detailed descriptions of each letter at various stages in its development. In learning to read, the single letter is of little importance; the appearance of letter groups is the basic element.

The student may find when he reads a page of difficult script such as the English court hand, that he can decipher only a word or two on the first attempt. If the apparatus is available, he should then compare facsimile and transcript word for word, and again read the facsimile. This process should be repeated until it is possible to read a long passage in the script without hesitation. As he proceeds to new facsimiles, he will find that the amount of material which he cannot decipher on the first trial decreases progressively. If transcripts are not available, the student will have to develop an alphabet of his own from the manuscript, using as a basis the words he can recognize, and proceed to decipher letter by letter.¹ This is naturally much slower and more difficult than using a transcript, and precludes rapid reading.

There will, of course, always be passages so difficult that they seem undecipherable. It is unwise to read over such a phrase or sentence again and again, in the hope that continued application will bring success: as a matter of fact, this repetition may tend to fix undersirable habits. Since context is such a powerful solvent in deciphering obscure passages, the student should continue because of the possibility that later material will clarify a difficult letter group. If this is not successful, the difficult passages can later be analyzed and given special

¹Infra, p. 75.

attention according to the nature of the difficulty. The last chapter of this study is concerned with a classification of such difficulties and various methods of handling them.

II. Some Collections of Facsimiles

Since manuscripts are unique, it follows that their accessibility is definitely limited to a comparatively small group of people. The need for some method of extending the sphere of influence of an important manuscript has long been recognized as one of the most important problems in palaeography. Mabillon used copper plate engravings to present his evidence, and almost without exception, every important palaeographical treatise since that time had included illustrations of some sort. With the improvement and more extensive application of photographic processes, the problem has been considerably simplified. The superiority of a photographic facsimile is apparent, since it is an actual reproduction, rather than a copy as were the older lithographs and engravings. Because of the far reaching effect the introduction of photography has had on the study of palaeography, Traube very aptly described the modern period in the history of the subject as "Das Zeitalter der Photographie."¹

Facsimiles of manuscripts have been published for various purposes. Not all are suited to the requirements of the beginner who is learning to read. His greatest need is a transcript by which he can check his accuracy and progress. If such a transcript does not accompany the facsimile, a good critical edition of the author whose work is represented in the manuscript may serve the same purpose. Other criteria by which the facsimile should be judged to determine its usefulness for the beginner learning to read include:

¹Ludwig Traube, Vorlesungen und Abhandlungen (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1909), I, 57-60.

1. Accessibility. Are copies of the facsimile available or was the edition so limited or so expensive that only a very few libraries can possess copies, This is an important item, since interlibrary loan is ordinarily impractical for large facsimiles.

2. Quality of reproduction. Has the photographic process employed by the publisher produced a clear facsimile of the exact size of the original, Have the lines been thickened or diminished in the chemical treatment of the negative?

3. Applicability. Is the specimen selected representative of the script the student is learning to read?

The bibliographical apparatus for palaeography in general is very inadequate. Weinberger's Wegweiser durch die Sammlungen altphilologischer Handschriften is very useful for locating manuscripts of particular authors and for information concerning important manuscript collections. To locate facsimiles which will serve his purpose, the student may find it necessary to search through such aids as Bursian's Jahresbericht, the bibliographical appendices and notes of the general handbooks, union catalogs, etc. A few examples of the various types of collections of facsimiles are given here, evaluated according to the standards formulated above.

There are several comprehensive collections of facsimiles designed to illustrate the entire history of writing, or comparatively large sections of it. Since specimens of such a great variety of scripts are therefore included, the student should be able to find one or more pertinent facsimiles in a publication of this kind.

Palaeographical Society, London. Facsimiles of manuscripts and inscriptions. London: W. Clowes and Sons, Ltd., 1873-1894.

New Palaeographical Society, London. Facsimiles of manuscripts, etc. Oxford: University Press, 1903-1930.

Of the general comprehensive collections, these publications of the Palaeographical Societies are perhaps best known to American students. The accomplishments of the societies are summarized as follows in the introduction to the last series:

In 1874, in spite of the labors of Montfaucon, Astle, Silvestre, and others, the foundations of palaeography had still to be laid. Students had no comprehensive collection of facsimiles at their disposal, and even many of the most important manuscripts were inaccessible or unfamiliar. Photography had only lately become available for the multiplication of evidence. Now it can fairly be claimed that the publications of the two Societies provide a comprehensive survey of the whole field of western palaeography, and suffice to give the student a firm basis for a general acquaintance with the subject.¹

A carefully prepared transcript accompanies each photograph, and adequate indices make the material accessible. Unfortunately, the various series were so expensive, that the number of complete copies available is rather limited.

Hermann Degering. Die Schrift; Atlas der Schriftformen des Abendlandes vom Altertum bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts. Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1929.

The title of this book is rather deceptive, but the purpose is clearly explained in the preface. It is definitely intended for the designer of printing types, and in the selection of specimens calligraphic styles of writing were always given preference.

There are no transcripts of any kind, and the book has little practical value for the purpose of learning to read a script.

E. A. Lowe (ed.). Codices latini antiquiores; a palaeographical guide to Latin manuscripts prior to the ninth century. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934- .

This is the most recent enterprise of the comprehensive type, and only the first part has appeared. Unlike the publications of the Palaeographical Society, it is of little value to the student who is learning to read. Its primary purpose is to assist in establishing criteria for localizing scripts.

¹New Palaeographical Society, Facsimiles of manuscripts, etc. (Oxford: University Press, 1903-1930), Series II, Vol. I, Introduction.

It should be stated at the outset that the interest of the work is almost wholly palaeographical. Its aim is to place before scholars a succinct description, based upon actual examination of the originals, of all known Latin literary manuscripts on papyrus, parchment, or vellum which may be regarded as earlier than the ninth century, accompanied by a specimen, unreduced, of the script, and supplemented by a selected bibliography.¹

The briefness of the specimens and the absence of transcripts eliminate the collection as a useful tool for reading purposes.

Anton Chroust (ed.). Monumenta palaeographica: Denkmäler der Schreibkunst des Mittelalters: Schrifttafeln in lateinischer und deutscher Sprache. Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1902-17; Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1927- .

This work is not yet complete, and the absence of a comprehensive index makes the location of particular specimens difficult. The reproductions are good, and there are exact transcripts for each. Particular emphasis is given to manuscripts connected with Germany.

Paris. École des Chartes. Album paléographique; ou, recueil de documents importants relatifs à l'histoire et à la littérature nationales. Paris: Quantin, 1887.

This collection is less comprehensive than the Palaeographical Societies' publications, but is similar in format and just as useful for the material it covers. The transcripts are carefully prepared and the reproductions represent some of the finest work obtained by the heliogravure process.

There are almost innumerable varieties of facsimiles published for special purposes. Perhaps most common are collections designed to illustrate the manuscript resources of particular libraries or groups of libraries. Usually there is a strong nationalistic character in publications of this kind.

Vienna, Nationalbibliothek. Monumenta palaeographica vindobonensia; Denkmäler der Schreibkunst aus der Handschriftensammlung des Habsburg-Lothringischen Erzhauses. Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1910- .

This collection includes some excellent facsimiles produced by the collotype process. It is general in scope, attempting to illustrate

¹E. A. Lowe, Codices latini antiquiores (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934-), I, vii.

all the important movements in mediaeval writing. The lack of transcripts and an index is a serious limitation for reading purposes.

Dom Antonio Staerk. Les manuscrits latines du v^e au xiii^e siècle conservés à la Bibliothèque impériale de Saint-Petersbourg. St. Petersburg: Krois, 1910.

This collection is of very slight value to the student learning to read. The illustrations are greatly reduced, and there are no transcripts. The book is really an elaborately illustrated catalog rather than a collection of facsimiles.

There are many collections of facsimiles designed to illustrate the history of various scripts or scriptoria. These are frequently invaluable for the student, since they collect in one place so many representative specimens.

Karl Zengemeister and Wilhelm Wattenbach. Exempla codicum latinorum literis maiusculis scriptorum. Heidelberg: Koester, 1876. Supplement, 1879.

The reproductions are satisfactory, but since sufficient material on the majuscule scripts is available in the more general collections, this publication is not indispensable. There are transcripts only for the more difficult passages.

Paul Ewald and Gustav Loewe. Exempla scripturae visigoticae, XL tabulis expressis. Heidelberg, 1883.

This is a comprehensive collection of relatively good reproductions but there are no transcripts. Practically every variety and stage of Visigothic script is illustrated.

E. A. Lowe.¹ Scriptura Beneventana: facsimiles of Southern Italian and Dalmatian manuscripts from the sixth to the fourteenth century. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929.

There are a few illustrations with transcripts in Lowe's Beneventan script, but they are not sufficient for the student learning to read the hand. The Scriptura Beneventana, which was planned as a

¹The correct spelling of this name is now Lowe, although some of his earlier books have the original spelling, Loew.

companion volume to the former book, is a very elaborate collection of facsimiles, perhaps as fine a publication of its kind as exists. The reproductions are excellent, and although complete transcripts are not given in every case, there is more than enough material for the beginner.

Charles Johnson and Hilary Jenkinson. English court hand. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915.

Hilary Jenkinson, The later court hands in England. Cambridge: University Press, 1927.

The portfolios of facsimiles which accompany these two volumes offer a representative and complete survey of the script. References are given to transcripts published in other places, when they do not accompany the plate. The material is sufficiently varied and extensive to meet the needs of any student learning this script.

Ernst Crous and Joachim Kirchner. Die gotischen Schriftarten. Leipzig: Kilinkhardt and Biermann, 1928.

Thirty-four specimens from manuscripts are included in the illustrative material for this volume. Unfortunately, there are no transcripts, and the selections are such that critical editions would be difficult to locate. For the beginner, therefore, the volume is only of slight value.

E. K. Rand, A survey of the manuscripts of Tours. Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1929.

L. W. Jones. The script of Cologne from Hildebald to Hermann, with 100 plates. Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1932.

These two volumes represent perhaps the finest work of this type. The reproductions are very well done, but the scope of the work is naturally limited to the surviving manuscripts of the scriptoria in question. If the material is pertinent, it is of great value for the student, although the lack of transcripts may cause some inconvenience.

In connection with the study of the transmission of

classical texts, there have appeared various facsimiles selected from manuscripts of classical authors. Frequently an entire manuscript, noteworthy for its historical, artistic, or textual features is published in facsimile. Transcripts are not essential for material of this kind, since critical editions are almost always available.

Émile Chatelain. Paléographie des classiques latins. Paris: Hachette, 1884-1900.

The reproductions are on the whole satisfactory, and the collection is rather comprehensive, including specimens from most of the important mediaeval scripts.

Charles H. Beeson. Lupus of Ferrieres as scribe and text critic; a study of his autograph copy of Cicero's De oratore, with a facsimile of the manuscript. Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1930.

Vergil. Codex Vergilianus qui Palatinus appellatur quam simillime expressus. Paris: apud "Editions historiques," 1929.

Unfortunately reproductions of this kind are usually issued in limited editions and are therefore difficult to locate. Furthermore, manuscripts worthy of special attention in this manner, are usually written in majuscule or Carolingian minuscules, and there is plenty of material for practice more easily accessible in the student manuals and general collections.

Finally, there are the collections of facsimiles designed definitely for the beginning student. Generally they include specimens of Latin writing from capitals to fifteenth century scripts. The greatest variation in regard to scope of the publications is usually found in the amount of material included from the cursive scripts.

Franz Ehrle and Paul Liebaert. Specimina codicum latinorum. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1927.

Wilhelm Arndt and Michael Tangl. Schrifttafeln zur Erlernung der lateinischen Paläographie. Third and fourth edition. Berlin: Grote, 1904-1929.

Sir Edward M. Thompson. An introduction to Greek and Latin palaeography. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912.

Maurice Prou. Manuel de Paléographie. Paris, 1924.

Maximilians Ihm. Palaeographia latina. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, n. d.

Franz Steffens. Lateinische Paläographie. Second edition. Trier: Schaar and Dathe, 1909.

Ehrle and Liebaert, based on manuscripts in the Vatican library, is a good collection, but the reproductions are not always the best. Transcripts are included for most of the specimens. Arndt-Tangl is a very useful collection, and is more extensive than many of the others, particularly for examples of cursive scripts. There are no transcripts since Arndt believed them to be a hindrance rather than a help in learning to read¹ but some of the difficult passages are explained. Thompson's illustrations are accompanied by transcripts and very elaborate descriptions, but the specimens are so limited by the size of the book, that they are only of secondary value for practice in reading. Prou's album contains a good selection, particularly in the later French scripts: in the 1896 and 1904 editions the transcripts accompany the facsimiles, but in the 1924 editions they are included in the text of the manual. Ihm includes approximately one example from each of the important mediaeval scripts. While there are no transcripts the selection is such that critical editions are usually available. The collection is particularly noteworthy because of its comparative inexpensiveness, which makes it more generally available. Traube's verdict, "Das beste Unterrichtsmittel ist jetzt....Steffens...."² is probably still true. The second

¹Wilhelm Arndt and Michael Tangl, Schrifttafeln zur Erlernung der lateinischen Paläographie (3d and 4th ed.; Berlin, 1904-1929), I, II.

²Traube, op. cit., I, 50.

edition, 1909, includes 120 plates with exact transcripts and detailed descriptions of the peculiarities of the writing. The reproductions are on the whole satisfactory, and the book is generally available.

In locating facsimiles for practice, the best method is probably to proceed immediately to a collection devoted entirely to the script in question, if such is available. For example, the Visigothic, Beneventan and English court hands are adequately treated in Ewald and Loewe, Lowe, and Johnson and Jenkinson, respectively. If such a detailed collection is not available, the most fruitful source is likely to be the student practice manuals. Since the number of specimens of any one script included in such a portfolio is usually rather limited, the student may find it necessary to use the general comprehensive collections, or any of the specialized reproductions that may be applicable.

CHAPTER VI
SOME COMMON DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN THE READING
OF MANUSCRIPTS

I. Introduction

Rapid reading is usually highly desirable not only for reading in general, but also for reading manuscripts. The suggestion has therefore been made that the student strive to develop the proper habits for rapid reading of manuscripts at the very outset, by trying to gather the meaning of the document as a whole or of large portions of it, disregarding unintelligible portions on the first reading. Difficulties can be given special attention later without destroying the continuity of the reading process.

At this point, therefore, some attention is given to the factors which cause difficulty in reading manuscripts, together with suggestions as to methods of solving them. The student must not expect a "key to manuscript reading," or a set of rules of thumb by which every difficult passage can be deciphered. Personal elements are so prominent both in the production of manuscripts and their reading, that such devices are impossible. However, by analyzing the causes of difficulties and considering methods that have proved successful in solving them, the student may be saved considerable time and trouble in interpreting some of the more common types of difficult passages. It may be necessary to adapt procedures to fit individual cases, but such suggestions as are included here should be indicative of the most profitable procedures.

Difficulties in reading manuscripts fall into two main groups: (1) those which arise in the attempt to decipher what was written; (2) those which arise in the attempt to interpret what was written. The first of these can be subdivided into difficulties caused by: (1) methods of forming letters; (2) conjoined letters, currency and ligatures; (3) size of script; (4) ornamentation; (5) mutilation. The second type might be similarly subdivided into difficulties caused by: (1) abbreviations, (2) errors in the form of the text, (3) word division and punctuation, (4) spelling, (5) proper names.

At times difficulties may be exceedingly complex with several of the above factors entering into the problem. If, however, the causes can be isolated, it should be possible to make some progress toward the solution of the difficulty regardless of the degree of complexity.

II. Difficulties Which Arise in Connection With Deciphering What Was Written

The general nature of the perceptive process in reading consists of patterns of black and white which are associated with words.¹ Occasionally, however, such perceptions do not set up the train of associations necessary to produce meaning. Letter by letter analysis after the manner of proof reading is then necessary to establish the composition of the word. After the reader is sure of the letters which comprise the word and their arrangement, he can proceed by various methods to determine the identity of that word.

In reading handwriting, such letter by letter analysis may be required more frequently than in reading printed material. The letter forms of any type font are definite and invariable,

¹M. D. Vernon, The experimental study of reading (Cambridge: University Press, 1931), p. 113.

but unfortunately the same cannot be said of the letter forms used by scribes. A frequent difficulty, therefore, in reading manuscripts is to establish what letters were actually written and how they group themselves into words.

A. Letter forms.--In learning to read a script, the student begins, as Jenkinson puts it, by learning the a b c of that script.¹ In other words, he learns to recognize a series of conventionalized characters which represent the letters of the alphabet. While the number of these characters may be comparatively slight, the possibility for variation in forming each of them is almost unlimited, since writing by its nature is a highly personal thing. Such variation may be controlled to some extent, but it is almost impossible to find examples where it has been entirely eliminated. It is apparent not only in the writing of various scribes using the same script, but even in the work of any single scribe at different periods.

As in painting, the various marks of individuality in a hand may in themselves seem insignificant, but when their composite effect is considered, they are of great importance.² The effect produced by these details might be called the scribal style of the writer. Scribal style belongs with that group of intangibles which apparently defy reduction to objectivity: nevertheless, a detailed knowledge of the style of a scribe is of great value in establishing exactly what he wrote. It may never be possible to reduce this to a definite formula, but usually some idiosyncracies can be isolated and used to establish what was written.

In almost every script there are groups of letters whose

¹Hilary Jenkinson, The later court hands in England (Cambridge: University Press, 1927), p. 18.

²Ludwig Traube, Vorlesungen und Abhandlungen (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1909), I, 7.

appearance is very similar. If the scribe is careless about the distinguishing features of these letters, considerable confusion may result. Some of the most common confusions are indicated in Table II. This table is not intended to be complete; its purpose is merely to indicate some of the general types of letter confusion.

Special mention should perhaps be made of the confusion resulting, particularly in the Gothic scripts, from the proximity of letters like i, m, n, and u, which are composed primarily of straight lines. The difficulty in resolving such a series of straight lines, known as minims, into letters and words is well illustrated by Ullman, who quotes the following sentence:

mimi numinum niuium minimi munium nimium uini muniminum
imminui uiui minimum uolunt. "The very short mimes of
the gods of snow do not wish that during their lifetime
the very great burden [munium is neuter singular] of
distributing the wine of the walls to be lightened."¹

Difficulties of this kind are by no means limited to readers of the manuscripts today for the sentence is taken from a thirteenth or fourteenth century anecdote specially composed to illustrate the difficulties of the Gothic script. Frequently a series of minims can be resolved into a number of different word combinations. In such a case, practically the only solution is to be found through trial and error, with judicious selection of the words most appropriate to the sense of the document. Whenever trial and error is used in solving a difficult passage in a manuscript, the student should be careful to exhaust all the possibilities before selecting any one of them.

Trial and error, however, is not the only method of identifying the letters in a manuscript text. Probably a much more satisfactory method is to construct an alphabet, not of the

¹B. L. Ullman, Ancient writing and its influence (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1932), p. 133.

TABLE II
SOME LETTERS COMMONLY CONFUSED IN THE MORE IMPORTANT MEDIAEVAL SCRIPTS

Script	Confusions									
	A, X	B, R	C, G, O, Q	E, F, P, T	H, K, N	I, L, P, T	M, N, IN	P, R, C		
Capital										
Uncial		B, R	C, G, O			I, L, P, T		P, R, C		
Half uncial			c, t, e			i, l			r, s, f	
Insular			c, t						r, n, s, f	
Spanish	a, t		c, g			i, l			r, s	
Beneventan	a, t			e, g		i, l	n, u		r, s, f	
Merovingian	a, u, ic	b, d							r, s, f	
Carolingian			c, t			i, l	m, in, n, u		r, s, f	
Gothic and its descendants			c, t			i, l	m, in, n, u		r, s, f	

script, but of the forms used by the scribe who wrote the manuscript under consideration. Montfaucon, commonly known as the father of Greek palaeography, suggested this technique as early as 1708,¹ and it is still approved by some of the best teachers of the subject.² As Madan puts it, "...difficulties connected with the forms of letters....indeed can almost be met in the case of any particular MS by a skillful use of methods used in solving cryptograms...."³

In constructing an alphabet of this kind, the student must of course work from the manuscript itself. It is very unusual to find a manuscript where it is impossible to recognize enough words to include most of the letters of the alphabet. Individual letters should be studied under a microscope to determine exactly how they were formed and to isolate any distinctive details. This procedure is particularly helpful in scripts like Gothic and Beneventan, where the distinction between hair lines and broad strokes is very important. In Figure 2, for example, careful inspection will reveal that the n is open at the bottom, but connected at the top with a hair line, while the u is formed in exactly the opposite fashion.

The important point in constructing the alphabet is to reproduce as closely as possible the same technique used by the scribe in forming his letters. Some knowledge of writing materials and their use at the time the manuscript was written is therefore essential. Examples of competent discussion of this problem will be found in:

¹Bernard de Montfaucon, Palaeographia graeca (Paris: Guerin, 1708), p. 11.

²Professor Charles H. Beeson.

³Falconer Madan, Books in manuscript (New York: Empire State Book Co., 1927), p. 33.

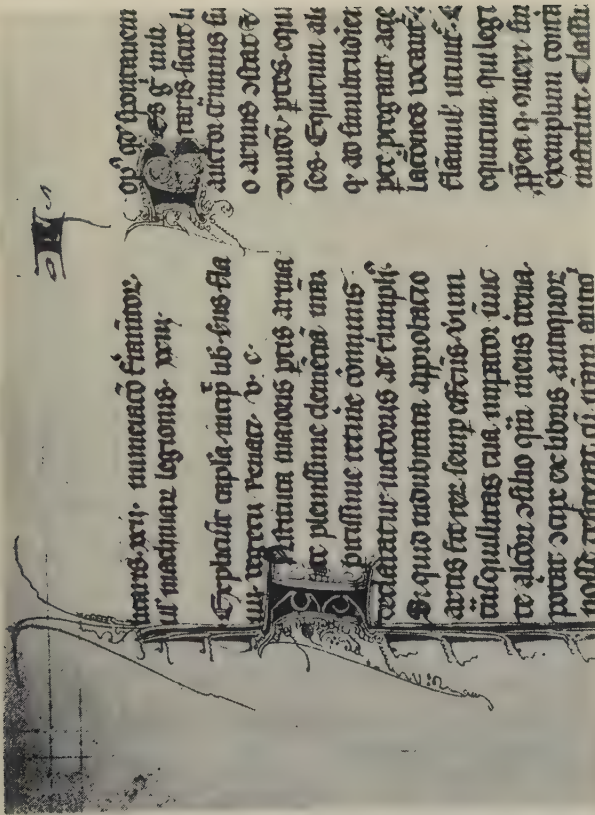


Fig. 2.--A specimen of Gothic Script. (After Ihm, Palaeographia latina, plate XVIII.)

B. L. Ullman. Ancient writing and its influence, pp. 196-216.

Hilary Jenkinson. The later court hands in England, pp. 10-11, 21-23.

Falconer Madan. Books in manuscript (2d ed.), pp. 6-18.

Karl Löffler. Einführung in die Handschriftenkunde, pp. 45-58.

The value of reconstructing the actual writing process in deciphering letters is well illustrated by Jenkinson:

Upon difficult points of detailed reading the best course, very often, if it can be taken, is to reconstruct the order of strokes in the letter or letters. To take an example, recently noted, from a late mixed Secretary-Italic Hand, a mark of this kind - *z* - was read alternatively as r, c, e and i, r and c both making sense of a sort: but examination with a glass showed that the formation was this - *z* - and that the letter could be nothing but an Italic s. Individual letters should always be studied with an eye rather to the way in which the writer made them than to the general effect he produced....¹

After an alphabet has been constructed, it can be used as a norm to which any uncertain character can be referred. It should be remembered that occasionally a scribe may use more than one form for a letter, and consequently examples of each should be included in the alphabet. Finally, too much emphasis cannot be placed on the careful study of minutiae, for often it is only a minor detail which distinguishes one letter from another.

B. Currency, conjoined letters and ligatures.--Speed is not the invention of the twentieth century, although it may be one of its most noted characteristics. In writing certain types of records, rapidity of production was just as important at the beginning of the present era as it is today. Since that age was not so well equipped with mechanical devices as our own, it had to make the most of human capabilities. In addition to various forms of shorthand that were apparently just as satisfactory as modern systems, the desire for speed in writing produced a form

¹Jenkinson, Later court hands....., p. 109.

of script known as current or cursive.

It is almost axiomatic that any calligraphic features had to be sacrificed to attain a maximum of speed. Appearance of the finished product was therefore a minor concern, and cursive scripts were reserved for business documents, personal notes and letters, and other ephemeral material.

The most distinctive feature of rapidly written manuscripts is the frequent occurrence of joined letters. Instead of lifting the pen after the completion of each letter, it was allowed to remain on the writing surface, producing connecting lines which were superfluous and non-essential for the actual formation of the letters. Writing sloped to the left or right is another common characteristic of cursive scripts, but whether or not it is due to speed is questionable.

The oldest cursive script which has been preserved is definitely based on the Roman capitals. The letters were simplified and written with much less care than in the book hand. Gradually the letters became smaller, and minuscule characteristics developed. The practice of taking an established book hand and writing it in cursive fashion was repeated again at later periods: the insular and Gothic scripts, for example, were adapted in this way.¹

The simplification of letters led to the elimination of as many strokes as possible. Capital E, for example, was originally written in four strokes, while the cursive variety of the same letter required only two or at the most three strokes,

The form of the letter might thereby become considerably altered, and if similar in appearance to some other letter in the script, its distinguishing features might become less prominent.

¹Beeson; cf. also, Ullman, op. cit., p. 129.

The tendency to connect letters affected their form considerably. Perhaps the best example of change in the form of a letter through the influence of cursive writing is found in the development of the e in the English Secretary hand:

....During an early period, the minuscule e had been formed by currency out of the majuscule E, a letter composed of three horizontal lines joined at their left ends to a vertical one: currency made first the vertical and the lowest horizontal in one action thus ; it then added the two upper horizontals, again in one action; this necessitated the addition of a diagonal stroke joining them in a kind of z form, thus : and the e of Domesday is a two-action letter of this type .

Further development by currency will be in the direction of producing a single-action letter and here external influence came in. If we make, say, an u and then endeavour to join on to it, without lifting the pen, as much as possible of the e shown above, we shall probably proceed to make, continuously, first the two upper limbs of the z part and then (still currently) what was originally the first part of the letter, the vertical with the lowest of the three horizontals; producing this effect . Remains the final stroke of the z portion of our early minuscule e and the conscientious scribe will take his pen off to add this separately: . The less scrupulous will let his pen travel on, adding a stroke to the letter which has no part of its original form, and produce . Then by a final effort of external currency we shall have this letter tied to its right-hand neighbour and get this . The most current Elizabethan form of this curious, but highly popular, e is : but more polished writers make it  and from this, by a last effort of formalism, it is turned back to an uncurrent, two-piece form .¹

In some cases more than one form of a letter might be developed depending on the letters preceding or following it.

The next development is writing two letters as though they were one. A combination of two letters represented by a single symbol is known as a ligature or digraph. The most common example is the symbol & for "and" which has persisted to the present time. Usually a ligature is nothing more than the two letters, joined, as one scholar puts it, in Siamese twin fashion.² The resulting symbol may, however, bear little or no

¹Jenkinson, Later court hands...., p. 8.

²Ullman, op. cit., p. 186.

resemblance to the letters themselves.

Some scholars distinguish an intermediate step between currently written letters and ligatures in the symbols known as conjoined letters or unions.

The word Ligature is used to cover those cases where two letters are combined by an extra stroke, as opposed to conjoined letters where two letters show medially a single stroke which properly belongs to both, as in the diphthongs *A* etc.....¹

Conjoined letters appear very early, usually at the end of lines where the scribe was crowded for space. Some common examples, in addition to the diphthong *A* , are *UR* , *N* , *UN* . Monograms are an extension of this practice to include all the letters of a word in one symbol. Perhaps most famous of monograms are the royal signatures.²

Currency in writing therefore leads to at least the following things: (1) simplification of letter forms, (2) multiplicity of variant forms for a letter, (3) connecting strokes, (4) ligatures and conjoined letters.

The simplification of letter forms and the great variety of characters that might represent a single letter are conducive to much confusion and difficulty in reading;

....currency is a force with infinite possibilities of individual development; and it is important that the student should realize that in a really current hand forms not to be found in any text-book may conceivably occur at any moment; though in practice this does not often happen.³

The necessity for a carefully prepared alphabet of the manuscript is therefore even greater for cursive scripts than for formal book hands. Analysis of letter forms stroke by stroke is almost

¹Jenkinson, Later court hands...., p. 45.

²See Figure 3.

³Jenkinson, Later court hands...., p. 8.

essential in some cases, and considerable ingenuity is sometimes necessary to determine whether or not a stroke is part of the letter or merely a connecting line. In an alphabet of a truly cursive script, it is wise to include combinations of letters to establish the form of a particular symbol as it is affected by proximity to different letters.

Ligatures vary greatly, both in form and in frequency, in various scripts and periods. Beneventan, for example, has a highly developed system of ligatures peculiar to that script; similarly the ligatures of insular writing are highly characteristic. Studies devoted to a particular script are therefore of value in deciphering its ligatures; Lowe, for example, devotes considerable space to a detailed study of Beneventan ligatures.¹ When such treatises are not available, the best method ordinarily is stroke by stroke analysis of the symbol.

As a rule, monograms are not of great importance in manuscripts; they are more common on coins and seals where space is greatly limited. DuCange, under the heading monogramma, includes a plate of monograms of French kings, but since it is not always trustworthy and needs revision, Prou lists more reliable sources.²

C. Size of script.--A definite system of measurement has been developed for type-faces, but there is no method for describing in exact terms the size of script. The size of printed characters ordinarily remains constant throughout a book, but in manuscripts the size of the script may vary slightly from letter to letter, and over a larger area such variation may reach considerable proportions. Measuring the size of script in exact units

¹E. A. Lowe, The Beneventan script (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), pp. 140-148.

²Maurice Prou, Manuel de paléographie (4th ed.; Paris, 1924), p. 160.

would, therefore, if pursued to its logical conclusion, mean the measuring of each letter individually. For all practical purposes, such qualitative terms as "large," "small" and "intermediate" are satisfactory.

The size of a script is usually determined to some extent by its nature; capital scripts for example, are as a rule much larger and have more space between letters than minuscule scripts. Similarly, insular pointed hand is generally smaller and more compact than insular round hand. Monumental scripts, ordinarily used only in fine copies of important books, are usually larger than the more common every day scripts. It has often been said that costs of material were much more important than labor costs during the Middle Ages. Economy of space in writing was therefore of great importance and may be at least partially responsible for the rapid development of minuscule writing. Even though size may be controlled to some extent by the nature of a script, there is still room for much variation within the script, and it is possible to find numerous specimens, all of different sizes, in Carolingian, Gothic, or any other hand.

The difficulty caused by size of script is probably chiefly psychological in nature. It is generally assumed that a small script is necessarily less legible, but the student should avoid any preconception of this kind. It has been shown that in reading printed material, legibility decreases only with very large or very small type-faces, and the same is probably true of handwriting.¹ Very large letters cover so much space that the amount of material included in each perception is limited, so that rate of reading is retarded. On the other hand, in very small writing, discrimination is difficult and letter by letter

¹A. R. Gilliland, "The effect on reading of changes in the size of type," Elementary school journal, XXIV (1923), p. 146.

reading may be required more frequently. It is probably true that a rather small script, like "a rather small type, even if it produces rapid reading initially, may be more fatiguing eventually."¹ The use of a reading glass should, however, be avoided as much as possible, for the constant shift in focus required of the eyes is ordinarily more tiring than the strain of reading small script. Common sense should always dictate the length of time a student can read anything without injurious fatigue.

More serious is the fact that a small script intensifies difficulties caused by other factors. This is particularly true of difficulties in distinguishing letter forms, since essential details are less prominent. In cases of this kind, the use of the microscope is advisable, since it helps to bring out indistinct strokes. It is generally a good rule, however, to reserve the microscope for the study of individual letters, and to eliminate it for normal reading unless the script is extraordinarily small.

D. Ornamentation.--The subject of book illustration is an extremely large and complicated field. Here we are concerned with only a very small section of it, namely, the ornamentation of script and how such ornamentation affects legibility. While writing is primarily practical, it can easily be adapted as a medium for artistic expression.

Fine writing, or calligraphy, was ordinarily reserved for special copies of important books. Every element in a fine copy was of the best obtainable, and the script had to be on the same level of excellence. Square and rustic capitals, which are really calligraphic scripts, were thus "...employed almost exclusively for de luxe copies of the pagan authors and....the use of square capitals persisted especially to honor Virgil."²

¹Vernon, op. cit., p. 166. ²Ullman, op. cit., p. 62.

In later periods, we find a Beneventan calligraphic hand an embellished Merovingian, the insular round hand, and various calligraphic Gothic hands used for fine copies. As a rule such scripts cause no particular difficulty; on the contrary, they may be more legible, since greater care was taken in forming the letters.

Nevertheless there are some calligraphic hands which are very difficult. Elaborate extension of all vertical strokes and suppression of horizontal strokes produced a narrow, elongated script that was very popular for various kinds of documents, papal and imperial.¹ It is almost impossible to read this script in the ordinary sense of the word: it must be deciphered letter by letter.

It is unusual for a book to be written in a calligraphic hand, but parts of its text might be decorated. In such a case, various methods might be used, such as: (1) use of inks of different colors; (2) use of a distinctive script to make words, phrases or sentences more prominent in the text; (3) use of special symbols to indicate the beginning of a paragraph or section; (4) exaggeration of some details of a letter, or the addition of extra strokes, curves, tails, etc.; (5) elaborate initials.

Color of ink does not, as a rule, seriously affect legibility, since black, which is ordinarily considered most legible,² was commonly used during the Middle Ages for most texts.³ Rubrication, the writing of significant phrases or words in red ink, may disturb the motor habits of the eye to some extent, but seldom

¹See Figure 3.

²Vernon, op. cit., p. 170.

³Prou, op. cit., p. 50.

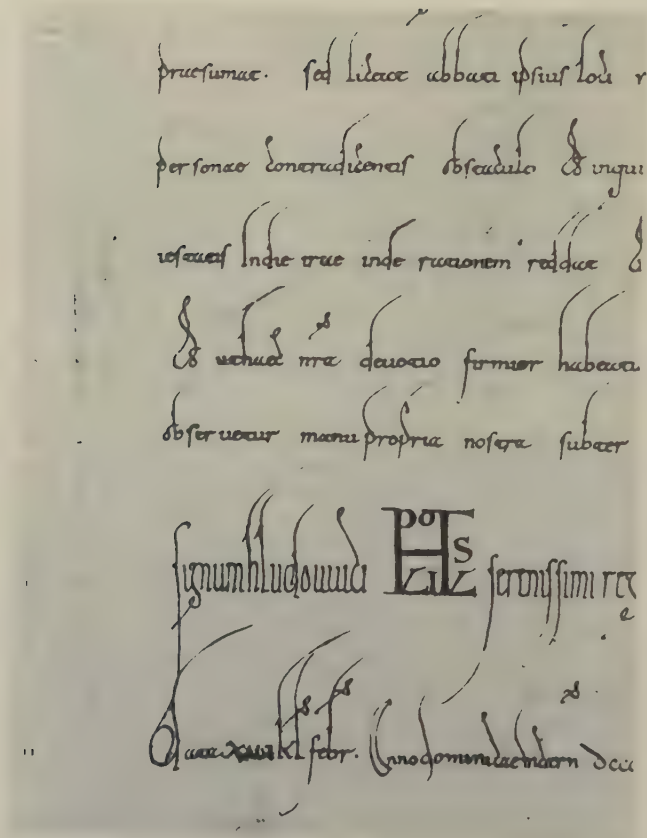


Fig. 3.--A Calligraphic Charter hand. (After Steffens, Lateinische Paläographie, plate LXIV)

causes a major difficulty. Books written in silver on purple vellum are apt to be difficult to read because of the dark writing surface and the tendency of the silver to oxidize. Such books, however, are very rare.

The use of a different script for heading, the opening words of chapters or sections of the text, explicit and incipits is a very old device. Ordinarily a capital or uncial script was used but sometimes a variation of the minuscule might be substituted. At the scriptorium of Tours, a "hierarchy of scripts" was devised, and the opening lines of the text might be written in a succession of capitals, uncials and half-uncials.¹ Where this method has been used, the student must be prepared to read the additional scripts.

The scribe had considerable freedom in the development of a symbol to introduce paragraphs or other divisions of the text. Such a symbol, although primarily practical in nature, would naturally adapt itself to elaboration. These symbols vary from two straight lines to a complicated design. Devices of this kind are ordinarily a help rather than hindrance, since when used intelligently, they divide the material into smaller thought units in much the same way as the modern convention of outlining.

The exaggeration of certain elements in a letter, e.g., vertical strokes,² or the addition of extra strokes may retard the rate of reading. In some cases the letters may become indistinct, and careful analysis, stroke by stroke, may be required to identify a letter. Signatures are a favorite subject for adornment, and paraphs, or formal flourishes added to signatures sometimes make them almost illegible. If possible, the paraph should be

¹Edward K. Rand, A survey of the manuscripts of Tours (Cambridge, Mass.: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1929), I, 49.

²See Figure 3.

distinguished from the signature proper, before attempting to decipher the letters. Naturally a knowledge of Christian names and surnames commonly used during the period when the manuscript was written is of great help in reading signatures.

The elaboration of initials can probably be traced to the papyrus roll, where some unusual device was needed to indicate the beginning of a separate section of the text. Elaborate initials may take a variety of forms, and their study is often more closely allied to art than to palaeography. In deciphering them, the student will often find that those strokes which comprise the letter are distinguished from the decorative strokes. Frequently, particularly in Gothic scripts, the decoration is done in hair line strokes.¹ If the decoration and the letter itself are more closely unified, it is sometimes helpful to consider the initial as a whole, rather than to attempt an analysis. Since the initial includes only one letter, or at the most a ligature, the remainder of the word is of great help in identification.

E. Mutilation.--Manuscripts like printed books are exposed to numerous enemies which cause destruction and mutilation. A lost or mutilated manuscript is, however, more serious than a lost or mutilated copy of a printed book, since manuscripts are by their nature limited to editions of a single copy. That ancient literature has been preserved at all is remarkable when we consider the prevalence and activity of these enemies. The historically authenticated accounts of wholesale destruction of libraries, the many fragments of manuscripts extant, and the relatively small proportion of classical literature which we possess indicate how effectively the many enemies of books have pursued their work of destruction.

¹See Figure 2.

Fragmentary and mutilated manuscripts constitute a special problem, and as one scholar says,

Den Paläographen beschäftigen mehr die aus mannigfachen Ursachen beschädigten Stücke, weil deren Schriftentzifferung zumeist mit grösseren Schwierigkeiten verbunden ist, als sie das intakte Werk je dargeboten hätte.¹

The chief difficulty with fragments, from the standpoint of reading, is the lack of continuity of thought. Fragments do not necessarily consist of the opening sections of a work, and to begin reading in the middle of an involved sentence is scarcely a desirable situation. There is, of course, no solution for a problem of this kind, unless the fragment can be identified as a copy of a known work. A good edition of that work can then be used for comparison.

Next to fragments, palimpsests probably constitute the most important group of mutilated manuscripts. Perhaps they are even more important, since some notable works of literature have been preserved only in this way. Palimpsests are manuscripts whose original text has been removed so that the parchment could be used for some other text. The ordinary methods for removing the original text were sponging, erasing, rubbing with pumice, and milk baths.² The story that Christian hatred of pagan literature is responsible for the existence of palimpsests is false, since some have been discovered in which a pagan work was written over an ecclesiastical treatise. There are probably many reasons for the existence of palimpsests: scarcity of parchment is certainly an important one; the manuscript may have been in bad condition and no longer very useful; the original text may have lost its interest; a newer, more legible script may have been desired.³

¹ Berthold Bretholz, "Lateinische Paläographie," Grundriss der Geschichtswissenschaft, ed. Aloys Meister (Leipzig: Teubner, 1912), Vol. I, part I, p. 63.

² Traube, op. cit., I, 96. ³ Ibid., p. 101.

Perhaps the most famous palimpsest is a manuscript which contains Cicero's De re publica under a copy of St. Augustine's Enarrationes in psalmos. It was discovered in 1820 by Angelo Cardinal Mai, and according to Traube, "Man kann sagen, dasz er infolge seiner glücklichen Funde schliesslich den Karkinalspurpur erhielt."¹ The discovery caused a sensation, probably because this is the only reasonably complete version of one of the most famous political treatises of a great Roman statesman.

Palimpsests can ordinarily be detected by traces of the original letters which show through the later writing, or by rulings that do not correspond to the lines of the text. To bring out the defaced writing, a method formerly very popular was the use of chemical reagents. Since a variety of ink common during the Middle Ages contained acid,² which corroded the manuscript, a reagent will bring out the letter even though the ink itself is no longer there. The chief difficulty with this method is in the deleterious effect of the reagents on the manuscript. In spite of attempts to neutralize them, they may discolor and damage the parchment. Every manuscript should be carefully photographed before applying any chemical to insure some record of its original appearance. At the present time, experiments with photography under ultra-violet light are proving successful and since this method produces no harmful after effects, it is preferable.

The manuscript which does not contain a damaged spot somewhere in its pages is unusual. Such damage may have been caused by any one of a number of things: water, fire, dripping candles, faded ink, hungry insects or mice are some of the more common causes. In one sense, erasure can also be considered mutilation,

¹Traube, op. cit., I, 97-98. ²Madan, op. cit., p. 18.

for it is frequently desirable to know what was erased. The effect of such mutilation, whatever its cause, is usually the same: the student must reconstruct what was originally written from very scant remains.

The first step in attempting to decipher a mutilated passage is to discover whatever may be left of the script. Careful study of the spot under a microscope will frequently reveal strokes or parts of strokes, and sometimes a single stroke is sufficient to identify a letter. Holding the page at various angles to the source of light is often useful when working with erasures. Such aids as the number of letters which the mutilated space could contain, or the number of possible syllables to fit a metric scheme should also be considered. If part of the word can be deciphered, the remainder can sometimes be supplied from the context. If the beginning of the word is clear, a dictionary is useful to discover the various possibilities; if the end of the word is clear, a special dictionary of Latin spelled backwards, compiled for the purpose, is often very useful.¹

Deciphering mutilated passages may often involve emendation, which is really the province of the textual critic. To avoid misunderstanding, therefore, uncertain readings and conjectural emendations should always be enclosed in square brackets [].² Even with this safeguard, it is good practice to avoid supplying anything without some more cogent reason than that the word or phrase fits the context. As one competent scholar says:

....conjectural emendation is at once the highest and most difficult part of the textual critic's task. But

¹Otto Gradenwitz, Laterculi vocum latinarum voces latinas et a fronte et a tergo ordinandas (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1904).

²"Report on editing historical documents," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, I (1923), 9.

this has not been generally understood; and in consequence it has been confounded with guessing, and pursued with a superficiality and insouciance that has often brought it into disrepute.¹

III. Difficulties Arising in Connection with the Interpretation of What was Written

Reading is clearly an interpretive process and "...involves not only a recognition of the word but also an extension of experience sufficient to provide a meaningful content with which the word may be associated."² Deciphering the letters in a manuscript is therefore not enough; those letters must be grouped into words, which, in turn, must be interpreted.

Since context is so helpful in establishing meaning, the necessity for familiarity with the subject matter of the manuscript cannot be overemphasized. As soon as it has been identified, the student should begin to master as much as possible of the available material relating to it.

The objection might be raised that many of the procedures used in interpreting a text involve textual criticism. The obvious answer is, of course, that if textual criticism is necessary for intelligent reading, it must be employed. Textual criticism, however, is a field distinct from that of palaeography and has its own problems, techniques, and literature.³

A. Abbreviations.--Abbreviations, however, belong clearly to the province of writing. There are probably two reasons for abbreviations in manuscripts: (1) the desire to attain speed in

¹J. P. Postgate, "Textual criticism," A companion to Latin studies, ed. Sir John Edwin Sandys (Cambridge: University Press, 1921), p. 804.

²Guy Thomas Buswell, Fundamental reading habits; a study of their development (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1922), pp. 4-5.

³Infra, pp. 98-100.

writing, and (2) the necessity for saving space. The importance of abbreviations in the history of writing was first demonstrated by Traube in his monumental work on the subject,¹ and it has been a major concern of all palaeographers since that time. For the purposes of reading, a knowledge of the rules and methods of abbreviation is probably not essential; according to Jenkinson,

Scores of students have indisputably learned to read adequately, even well, without ever troubling to memorize a palaeographic rule, without even knowing why a particular sign is called Tironian or how the earliest contractions were concerned with the name of God.²

On the other hand, such a knowledge is certainly useful in extending abbreviations, a process which every reader must master. If it is possible, the student should therefore become acquainted with the work that has been done on the subject. Most of the modern handbooks on palaeography contain summaries of the results obtained by Traube and his successors.

It is perhaps not inappropriate to discuss briefly at this point the three main types of abbreviation: (1) suspensions, (2) contractions, (3) special signs. The most widely used form was suspension, by which the initial letter or letters represented the whole word.³ H. R. H. and C. O. D., two common modern abbreviations, are examples of this type. In syllabic suspension, the initial letter of each syllable is given, e. g. t̄m for tamen. In contraction the initial and final letters are given;⁴ the form Dr. is an example of this type of abbreviation. The advantage of contraction in a highly inflected language like Latin is apparent. Tironian notes are derived from the system of shorthand devised by

¹Traube, op. cit., I, 129-156.

²Hilary Jenkinson, Palaeography and the practical study of court hand (Cambridge: University Press, 1915), p. 8.

³Ullman, op. cit., pp. 175-177. ⁴Ibid., pp. 177-182.

Tiro, Cicero's famous secretary. They are the source for many of the special signs used in mediaeval abbreviation.¹ They were particularly common on the British Isles, and spread from there to the continent. Examples are  for est,  for autem,  for con.

A symbol of some sort, usually a line over the letters, was adopted very early to distinguish an abbreviation from the other words in the text. This abbreviating stroke took various forms, and was often elaborated and decorated in calligraphic writing.

The important point in reading is, of course, to extend abbreviations accurately. There are several dictionaries of abbreviations available, which are invaluable, though not always all that might be desired.

W. M. Lindsay. Notae Latinae, an account of abbreviations in Latin manuscripts of the early minuscule period. Cambridge: University Press, 1915.

Lindsay's work is very unusual, since it is a highly scientific account of the subject and at the same time a useful tool. Lindsay has discovered much new and valuable information about abbreviations, yet in the arrangement and presentation of that information, he has kept in mind the needs of the student who is reading manuscripts.

Adriano Cappelli. Lexicon abbreviaturarum, dizionario di abbreviature Latine ed Italiane. Third edition. Milan: Hoepli, 1929.

This book has gone through three editions, with German translations of the first and second. Although each new edition was supposedly revised, the work was done either hastily or badly. Another defect is that it is based almost exclusively on Italian manuscripts, although this becomes an advantage when the student is

¹Ullman, op. cit., pp. 182-184.

working with such material. The bibliography included at the end of the volume is useful but badly in need of revision: Lindsay's monumental work, for example, published in 1915, is not listed in the third edition of 1929. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of valuable material in this collection and the student will probably find it very useful on occasion.

Maurice Prou, "Dictionnaire des abbréviations latines et françaises employées dans les livres et chartes du moyen âge," Manuel de paléographie latine et française. Fourth edition. Paris, 1924, pp. 309-474.

Prou's list of abbreviations is based primarily on some of the older dictionaries.¹ It is, however, a useful compilation, particularly for its list of French abbreviations.

Charles T. Martin, "Abbreviations of Latin words used in English records," "Abbreviations of French words used in English records," The record interpreter. Second edition. London, 1910, pp. 1-177.

Andrew Wright, Court hand restored, ed. C. T. Martin. London: Stevens and Sons, 1912.

Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy (ed.), "Abbreviations," Registrum Palatinum Dunelmense. London: Longman and Co., 1878. IV, cxxix-cclxi.

While these three compilations are to some extent general in nature, they emphasize particularly the abbreviations to be found in English documents. Martin's list, which is very ingeniously arranged, is probably the best, although that of Hardy is also very useful.

There are several older dictionaries, most of which are listed in Cappelli's bibliography. These are, however, superseded to a large extent by the works described above. If the student has access to Lindsay and Cappelli, or to Martin if working in English documents, he should be fairly well equipped.

Not all abbreviations that appear in mediaeval manuscripts are to be found in dictionaries.

¹Prou, op. cit., p. 309.

With the coming of Gothic in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the use of abbreviations reached a climax. The old abbreviations of whatever origin were freely used, and new ones were invented. One reason for this growth was the activity in the study of medicine, law, and philosophy in the universities.¹

Der mittelalterliche Schreiber gibt seinem Text gewöhnlich mit den zu seiner Zeit üblichen Abkürzungen. Am Anfang des Mittelalters mässig an Umfang und im grossen ganzen auch für den Nichtgeübten leicht zu lesen, werden diese Abkürzungen in den späteren Jahrhunderten zu einem alles überwuchernden Auswuchs der Hast und der Massenherstellung, der das Textbild jedenfalls für den heutigen Leser höchst unerfreulich gestaltet.²

To list all abbreviations of this kind would be impractical;

Hardy, for example, says:

There are many records where almost every word is contracted, and if all had been noticed the tables would have been quadrupled in extent, inasmuch as the same word is repeated in various ways.³

When a student encounters "capricious abbreviations,"⁴ as Lindsay terms them, practically the only solution is to rely on context. If enough initial letters are given, it is sometimes possible to identify a word by a process of elimination in a regular dictionary, but this method may take a great deal of time. It is usually most successful with technical terms; often, e.g., in reading English court rolls, an abbreviation which does not appear in Martin's list can be identified by the use of the same author's "Glossary of Latin words found in records and other English manuscripts."

Finally, two points should be emphasized: (1) the student should try to overcome any idea that an abbreviated text is neces-

¹Ullman, op. cit., p. 185.

²Karl Löffler, Einführung in die Handschriftenkunde Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1929), p. 190.

³Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy (ed.), "Abbreviations," Registrum Palatinum Dunelmense (London: Longman and Co., 1878), IV, cxxix.

⁴W. M. Lindsay, Notae Latinae (Cambridge: University Press, 1915), p. 415: "Any frequently occurring word or phrase was sure to be abbreviated for economy of the scribe's labour; but through an aversion to monotony, the abbreviation was seldom confined to one form."

sarily difficult;¹ (2) no expansion should be included in a transcript unless the student is certain that it is correct.²

B. Difficulties in form of the text.--The primary reason for the existence of a book is to preserve the text which it embodies. Books may be acquired or treasured for other reasons, but ordinarily preservation and diffusion of the text are the chief motives for their production. Naturally the best text is that which is closest to the actual words intended by the author. A book entirely free from errors is very unusual, even in these days of galley proofs and specially trained proof-readers. The errors in the text of a manuscript are still more common and often more difficult to eliminate. They must however be eliminated to attain satisfactory reading, that is, reading which reconstructs the thought of the author. The student who is reading a manuscript may therefore be forced to edit it at the same time. In making transcripts, however, the purpose is to reproduce the manuscript as closely as possible, and no alteration should be made, no matter how necessary it may be for intelligent reading.³

Textual errors in manuscripts might be divided into two groups: (1) those occurring in the autograph or original copy; (2) those introduced in the process of transmitting the text in later copies.⁴ When errors occur in an autograph copy, they are

¹Charles Johnson and Hilary Jenkinson, English court hand (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), p. xxii: "The beginner is almost always unduly impressed with the difficulty of reading abbreviated writing."

²"Report on editing historical documents," Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research, I (1923), 8: "Abbreviations whose meaning is in the least uncertain should be represented by an apostrophe or if necessary by a facsimile copy in the margin."

³Ibid., p. 7.

⁴Postgate, op. cit., p. 792.

usually due to slips of the pen or to ignorance.¹ There is a wide variety of errors in copies, and they naturally increase with each successive copy.²

Among the errors of autograph manuscripts, those which cause most difficulty are probably errors in grammar and spelling. Grammar, good usage, and other linguistic phenomena are notoriously unstable, as the differences between classical and mediaeval Latin clearly show. Before assuming that a construction is incorrect, the student should be absolutely certain that it was not acceptable at the time the manuscript was written. A good historical grammar should be consulted before making any decision on a point of this kind.

Errors in spelling should be treated in a similar manner. The feeling for rigid rules of spelling seems to be a modern development:

Until the latter part of the sixteenth century the very idea of rigid rules of spelling (except in Latin) is foreign to most writers of Archives, and one might probably say to writers in general. Eccentricities of spelling continue, of course, to a still later date.³

While there may have been rigid rules for spelling Latin, they were either unknown or disregarded, judging by the spelling of many mediaeval manuscripts.⁴ Definite standards for Latin orthography were not revived until the introduction of printing.

Wie sie die Schreibweise nach der verschiedenen Muttersprache der mittelalterlichen Gelehrten gebildet, wie sie durch die Unkenntniss der Schreiber entsteht war, so ist sie natürlich zunächst von den Gelehrten

¹Postgate, op. cit., p. 792.

²Infra, pp. 98-100.

³Jenkinson, Later court hands...., p. 109.

⁴Errors in spelling can often be classified and used in localizing manuscripts. Cf. Lowe, Beneventan script, pp. 282-285.

des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts beibehalten worden. Doch gerade die Buchdruckerkunst erleichterte die Vergleichung mehrerer Texte und führte zur Erkenntniss der Unregelmässigkeiten, welche in der Schrift herrschten.¹

Good etymological dictionaries may be essential in identifying words that apparently do not belong in the language. Since so many errors of this kind are due to confusion concerning the phonetic values of letters, a knowledge of the history of sounds in the language is invaluable. Such books as Schuchardt's Der Vokalismus des Vulgärlatein, Niedermann's Précis de phonétique historique du Latin, or Kent's The sounds of Latin should assist the student in identifying apparently meaningless words.

When a manuscript was copied, there was the probability not only that its errors would be perpetuated, but also that new ones might be introduced. It is probably unwise to generalize about the ignorance of mediaeval scribes,² but on the other hand, literacy is only a rough index of intelligence. Hall has classified the errors "....to which copyists are prone"³ as follows:

- I. CONFUSIONS AND ATTEMPTS MADE TO REMEDY THEM
 - (1) Confusion of similar letters and syllables.
 - (2) Misinterpretation of Contractions.
 - (3) Mistranscription of words through general resemblance.
 - (4) Wrong combination or separation; wrong punctuation.
 - (5) Assimilation of Terminations and accomodation to neighbouring construction.

¹ Wilhelm Brambach, Die Neugestaltung der lateinischen Orthographie in ihrem Verhältniss zur Schule (Leipzig: Teubner, 1868), p. 57.

² Madan, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

³ F. W. Hall, A companion to classical texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), p. 153. The present tense is significant: when a student is making a transcript he is making a new copy of the manuscript, and may therefore be just as prone to these errors as the mediaeval scribe. Careful revision of the work and respect for accuracy are essential.

- (6) Transposition of letters (anagrammatism) and of words and sentences; dislocation of sentences, sections and pages.
- (7) Mistranscription of Greek into Latin and vice versa.
- (8) Confusion of Numerals.
- (9) Confusion in Proper Names.
- (10) Mistakes due to change in pronunciation, Itacism, etc.
- (11) Substitution of synonyms or of familiar words for unfamiliar.
- (12) New spellings substituted for old.
- (13) Interpolation or the attempt to repair the results of unconscious errors.

II. OMISSIONS

- (14) Haplography, or the omission of words or syllables with the same beginning or ending (homoeoarcta and homoeoteleuta).
- (15) Lipography (parablepsia), or simple omission of any kind.

III. ADDITIONS

- (16) Repetition from the immediate (Dittography) or neighbouring context.
- (17) Insertion of interlinear or marginal glosses or notes (adscripts).
- (18) Conflated readings.
- (19) Additions due to the influence of kindred writings.¹

One of the most important aims of textual criticism is to "....eliminate the residuum of error which even the best documents will be found to contain."² If the student is working with a manuscript that is definitely a copy, it may be necessary for him to determine the relation of that copy to the general textual tradition. The librarian too must sometimes recognize the necessity for this information, for as Löffler says:

Zwischen Incipit und Explicit den ganzen Text genau durchzulesen und etwa mit einer kritischen Ausgabe zu vergleichen, wird sich in den wenigsten Fällen lohnen, auch aus Mangel an Zeit meist nicht möglich sein. Doch wird bei wichtigeren Handschriften wohl einem guten Katalog eine, wenn auch kurze, Kennzeichnung der Textfassung und ein Versuch ihrer Einreihung in die Handschriftenfiliation, in den Stammbaum der Textüberlieferung, erwartet.³

¹F. W. Hall, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

²Ibid., p. 109.

³Löffler, op. cit., p. 192.

In eliminating the errors resulting from copying and in determining the place of a manuscript in the textual tradition, the rules and principles of textual criticism must be observed. Two brief but competent discussions of the subject are available in Hall's A companion to classical texts and in Sandys' A companion to Latin studies.¹

C. Word division and punctuation.--Early manuscripts were written without separation of words; the practice was first established during the Carolingian period.² Even after this time, the writing was often crowded together, either to save space or for esthetic reasons, since there "apparently was the feeling that spaces at uneven intervals marred the beauty of the line."³ In Latin texts there was no absolute necessity for word separation, because the language is highly inflected and word endings serve the same purpose. Nevertheless, it is a great advantage for the modern reader, accustomed to almost universal observance of the practice.

In reading a continuous text there are frequently various possible word formations into which the letters can be grouped. Word separation was a common source of error for the mediaeval scribe,⁴ and errors in the text can sometimes be eliminated by rearranging the letters. A thorough knowledge of the language is, of course, practically indispensable for any experiments of this kind, and context should always be an important factor in the final choice.

¹This material by Postgate is essentially the same as his article "Textual criticism" in the fourteenth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

²Ullman, op. cit., pp. 211-213.

³Ibid., p. 211.

⁴F. W. Hall, op. cit., pp. 172-173.

Punctuation is a comparatively early device, but until the ninth century it was quite simple.¹ The symbol used was a dot, whose force was determined by its position: on the line (.) it indicated a brief stop; even with the top of the letters (°) it indicated a full stop; midway (·) it had an intermediary value.² New symbols were gradually introduced, including the comma, the virgula (/), quotation marks, question mark, etc., until by the ninth century practically all the important punctuation marks were known.³

Punctuation like spelling was apparently never very rigid. The chief difficulty in connection with punctuation marks is in finding modern equivalents. Perhaps the explanation of this is to be found in the theory that the basis of mediaeval punctuation was rhetorical, while the modern system is logical in nature.

It will be seen....that it is impossible to give the exact values of the mediaeval points in terms of modern punctuation. The reason for this is that the two systems are different in principle. Our modern system is chiefly concerned with marking logical pauses. The ancient system was also concerned with indicating inflexion of the voice, so that a person reading aloud could see where the voice was to be raised and where it was to be allowed to drop. Helps of this nature were, of course, especially important in the case of liturgical books. And the introduction of systematic punctuation in France as well as in Italy doubtless arose from the desire to facilitate correct reading at divine service and in the refectory.⁴

Scribal style is a great help in interpreting punctuation. There have been some attempts to make generalizations concerning the usage in groups of manuscripts, but they are not very successful.⁵ Context must, of course, influence the value assigned to

¹Ullman, op. cit., pp. 212-215.

²Prou, op. cit., p. 265. ³Ullman, op. cit., pp.214-215.

⁴Lowe, Beneventan script, pp. 231-232.

⁵Cf. Lowe, op. cit., pp. 227-279; Jenkinson, Later court hands....,pp. 99-101.

any symbol: the meaning of a series of words can at times be considerably altered by changing the punctuation.¹

For making transcripts, the following rules with regard to punctuation have been laid down: words should be separated according to modern usage wherever possible, but the original punctuation should be copied as closely as possible.² In this connection, Jenkinson says:

It follows also, since progress of knowledge is here dependent on the accumulation of a very large amount of evidence in accessible form, that it is particularly desirable to reproduce the original punctuation in transcriptions printed. We may add a note that exact accuracy in transcribing odd punctuation is particularly difficult to attain.³

D. Proper names.--The beginnings of rigid rules for spelling can be discerned shortly after the introduction of printing, but proper names have continued to be indefinite until very recent times. There are two main groups of proper names, personal and place names, which present special difficulty when encountered in manuscripts. Proper names were frequently distinguished from the rest of the text by a capital letter, underscoring, or some similar device, although there is no uniformity in procedure. After a word has been distinguished as a proper name, it frequently must be identified to give meaning to the text.

Even at the present time there is considerable laxity in regard to the source and permanence of personal names. During the Middle Ages the situation was still worse, for people were distinguished only by Christian names. Extensive biographical research is therefore sometimes necessary to identify personal

¹ Cf. F. W. Hall, op. cit., pp. 173-174.

² "Report on editing historical documents," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, I (1923), p. 8.

³ Jenkinson, Later court hands...., p. 100.

names, and the student should be familiar with the available tools. In 1934 the English Library Association published An analytical bibliography of universal collected biography compiled by Phyllis M. Riches. It is particularly valuable because it emphasizes sources for information on more obscure names.¹ Unfortunately, it is limited to books in the English language: the more general bibliographies, such as Mudge, Paetow, Minto, are therefore of further help for material in foreign languages. Such highly specialized tools as Martin's list of names commonly found in English records in his The record interpreter should not be overlooked.

The intensive study of place names within the last half century has produced a great quantity of useful reference material. Bibliographies are published from time to time in Zeitschrift für Ortsnamenforschung, and Paetow's A guide to the study of mediaeval history contains an excellent selective bibliography.

Since proper names so seldom have any real intrinsic meaning, they are particularly liable to corruption in the process of copying.² The student should therefore be prepared to apply the rules of textual criticism to verify the form of a name in any manuscript that is a copy.

¹Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, "Introduction," An analytical bibliography of universal collected biography, comp. Phyllis M. Riches (London: Library Association, 1934), p. ix.

²F. W. Hall, op. cit., p. 155.

